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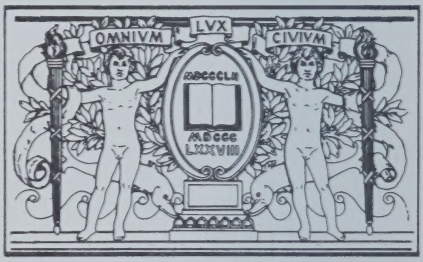

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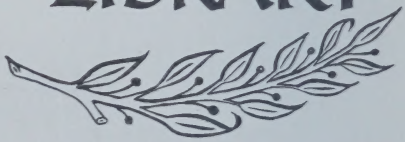

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GHOSTS AND SPIRITS
IN THE
ANCIENT WORLD

BY

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PREFACE

This little essay is an attempt to give an idea to the general reader of what men and women in early times used to think about occult and spiritualistic manifestations. A few characteristic examples have been chosen from certain of the ancient civilizations in the East and West, and here and there I have compared the earlier accounts with those of modern times. Owing to limited space it has been found possible to deal with but a fraction of the available material, but I hope the selection has been judicious and may prove of interest also to those who have some detailed knowledge of spiritualism and psychical research.

In conclusion I have to thank all those who have so kindly assisted me both with criticisms and advice, above all the former, which has been often unsparing and consequently as valuable as it was appreciated.

E. J. DINGWALL

INTRODUCTION

When man first began to look around him and observe the external world he did not learn very much. Indeed it took many thousands of years for him to learn anything except to feed, clothe and house himself, and even then very inadequately. Civilization as we understand the word arose in the East, and it is to the East that we must turn if we wish to study the earliest human efforts in culture and self-expression.[1] But long before this, man had begun to reason a little about the events in the world around him, and it was only very gradually that he began to turn his thoughts inwards upon himself. Queer things were often happening. After a heavy meal, which perhaps followed a

[1] I do not propose to enter here upon a discussion of the spiritual and magical beliefs of Palaeolithic man. Ceremonial burials have been noted from Aurignacian times and the occurrence of Palaeolithic art has suggested to some that the doctrine of sympathetic magic was early developed. I am, however, not convinced by these assertions.

period of want, he would lie down in a corner of some cave or hut and sink into a profound sleep. Then a new world was unfolded before him. The dream life, rich in images and bizarre and sensational occurrences provided him with fresh experiences wherein he was often the central figure and a successful actor in many a heroic exploit or deed of prowess. We do not know precisely how far primitive man reasoned about the nature of his dream experiences. As civilization advanced and the horizon of human activity widened the dream life assumed a more important aspect. The dream content was enriched : events became interwoven with unconscious desires and wishes and the time became ripe for those who wish to interpret anything they cannot understand. It may well be that this desire for interpretation preceded any ordered civilization. Savage peoples today (although in many instances the term ' primitive ' cannot be properly applied to them), reason about their dreams and try to interpret according to their limited experience the amazing incidents of their

life when asleep. Some of the natives of South East Australia think that a part of the man becomes separated during sleep and when detached can converse with other similarly disconnected personalities and also with the souls of the dead.[1]

Precisely similar beliefs are to be found in modern Western civilization, and books have been published giving detailed instructions how to separate this secondary or ' astral ' body from its physical counterpart. It would seem probable that this explanation of certain dream experiences would be evolved by simple people, and there is ample evidence which suggests that they do in fact invent such facile interpretations. Hence arose much curiosity and discussion, and as culture advanced the need for a fuller interpretation began to be felt. The atmosphere of mystery which surrounds the dream life was a potent factor in the development of what is called oneiromancy or divination by dreams. If the dreamer failed to find a satisfactory explanation of some peculiar

[1] A. W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South East Australia* (London, 1904), pp. 434 ff.

incident there were always persons with an air of superior wisdom who would supply the deficiency.

The thoroughly practical character of the ancient Egyptians is exemplified in their treatment of dreams. Unfortunately we do not know a great deal about dream interpretation in the Nile Valley, although the seeds of many a later system can be detected there. The Egyptian appeared to believe that one form at least of divine intervention was exercised in dreams, and it was through them that the Gods made demands, gave sundry warnings and replied to the questions of their worshippers. The interpretation of dreams was, at one time in Egyptian history, the business of a special class of persons, but oneiromancy was never studied with the passionate devotion which was displayed in Babylonia.

Just as in modern times so in the earlier history of man, dreams became invested with a significance which transcended normal experience. We have seen how the Australian aboriginal believes himself in touch with the spirit world when

dreaming, and how the ancient Egyptian regarded certain of his dreams as due to direct interference of his deity. Indeed it was reported that actual restoration of temples was carried out in accordance with supposed instructions through dreams, and some evidence exists which goes to show that the practice of sleeping in temples (incubation) was widely practised for the purpose of obtaining responses from the Gods.

Apart however from dreams it is possible, and indeed probable that early man had certain experiences which we know occur among savage peoples to-day and which are shared by members of civilized peoples. It was natural that so long as mankind remained at the food-gathering stage and followed a more or less nomadic existence little attention would have been paid to psychological experiences which require consideration and thought for their appreciation. It was only when the discovery of agriculture induced a more stable form of existence, and when man began to dwell in settled communities that speculation about the

meaning of the external world and about himself began to be seriously indulged. Thus, although as we have said it is probable that early man at the food-gathering stage had experiences described as ' occult ', yet it was only when civilization was well advanced that these occurrences became recognized and claimed a part in magic and religion.

Now of all the ancient civilizations of the Orient, that which was developed by the marvellous genius of the Egyptians is the most important. It was in Egypt that many of the foundations of modern civilization were laid, and it is to Egypt that we must go if we wish to watch the beginnings of spiritualism and man's early attempts to grapple with the occult world. To the ancient Egyptian as to the spiritualist to-day unusual phenomena implied interference from without : the psychological processes underlying cases of shifting personalities were unknown, and such unfortunate people were treated as if they were possessed by alien entities. Similarly as we have seen, the dream life was full of meaning to the early dweller

by the Nile. It was through these experiences that he entered into communion with his deity, who thus made his wishes known to mortals.

In the next chapter we shall see how the Egyptian devised special means for getting into touch with the spirit world, and how gradually, as the secret knowledge filtered down from the aristocracy to the commoners, it was debased and became a field in which charlatanism flourished just as it does to-day. Moreover we shall notice how the knowledge spread and how the genius of each individual civilization expressed itself in presentation and modification, until the Western world took over the secrets of occultism from the East, finally giving birth to modern spiritualism itself. We cannot deal here with the beginning of spiritualism in all the civilizations of the ancient world. Only a very general outline can be given in relation to the more important culture of early times. Thus we shall have little to say concerning occult practices in India and the Far East, although a few words have been devoted

to China on account of the startling similarity of the phenomena with those of modern times. Similarly we shall not be able to glance at the history of spiritualistic manifestations in the vast continent of America, although it is probable from what we know of the Spanish chroniclers that occult arts were well developed in the early civilization of Central America. All we can do here is to glance at some of the earliest recorded manifestations of what we still call the ' supernormal ' and in so doing to show how both speculation and methods of approach were gradually diffused across wide areas and over long intervals of time.

SPIRITUALISM IN EGYPT AND THE ANCIENT EAST

We have seen in the introductory chapter how the ancient Egyptians regarded dreams and how, as civilization advanced, they began to study their meaning and interpretation. In a similar way certain other odd occurrences began to claim their attention, and gradually a theory of intervention by a world of spirits was built up. In the present state of our knowledge it is impossible to distinguish accurately the various phases in the growth of such beliefs. We know that the Egyptians believed in a world of spirits just as orthodox Christians do to-day, but it is impossible to disentangle the confusion of thought which was everywhere apparent. A similar vague obscurity is to be discerned in Christian demonology, and the ordinary English churchman would find it difficult to specify the various grades of good and evil spirits who people the world beyond.

The eminent Latin Father Tertullian gives a good deal of information concerning the early Christian views of devils, and he pictures the angels of heaven peering down at Christians in a theatre and recording the sins to which they were especially liable in that place of temptation. According to Christian teaching a multitude of devils are engaged in the work of temptation, for Satan himself, the Arch-Fiend, being not omnipresent, is engaged solely in seducing the saints and the sons of the elect. Frailer brethren must be content with minor orders. These crowd around them and great care must be exercised—

Christian, dost thou feel them,
How they work within,
Striving, tempting, luring,
Goading into sin?

In Egypt also the world of demons was well peopled, and their influence on mankind was far from salutary. We cannot however deal with this question here. We must pass on to consider certain phenomena which seem to be associated with the world of angels and devils, and although the material is not large there are a few

features which are clear enough to afford a striking picture of certain of the results of the belief of the Egyptians in the reality of supernormal occurrences.

Now, apart altogether from the interpretation of dreams, divination in the Nile Valley was also practised in other directions. Although there is some reason to suppose that some of these processes were introduced later, the details perhaps being imported, it is probable that their origins lay in the past, and that an orderly development could be detected if we were able to pick up each individual thread in their long history. Among these methods that of the use of the divinatory vase may be selected as an apt illustration of what is meant. Employed in connection with the Anubis cult, the divining vessel was used in later times probably in the same way as bowls of water and ink are used to-day for the purpose of gazing. A person gazes fixedly into some bright and polished surface in which hallucinatory visions are wont to appear. There is no doubt whatever about the reality of these visions; and naturally those that are able to perceive

them are treated as superior to those whose efforts are unavailing. Children, specially chosen for certain qualities, were often employed as gazers in Egypt, and the practice has continued till modern times, having spread through many parts of North Africa.[1]

Now the custom of gazing upon smooth polished surfaces is carried out in a variety of ways. Sometimes, as appears to have been the method in the ancient East, vessels containing liquids were employed, but gradually the use of a piece of crystal, and finally crystal or glass balls, came into fashion. From experiments conducted in modern times with crystal-gazers it has become apparent that the visions or hallucinations can actually in certain cases be interpreted. We know now that crystals can be used for refreshing a faulty memory, and that

[1] Cf. E. Lefébure, "Le Vase Divinatoire" (*Sphinx*, 1902, vi, 61-85). For trick mirrors see *Ib.*, pp. 80-81. The use of children as gazers continued far down into modern times. Their supposed innocence was at the base of their employment, since it was imagined that the entities responsible for the visions would present them only to those whose physical purity was unsullied.

facts completely forgotten by the percipient may be brought back to consciousness through hallucinatory pictures arising from the use of the crystal. Similarly it has been reported that pictures sometimes occur which refer to incidents with which the gazer could never normally have been acquainted; and whatever may be the truth of this assertion there is no doubt that belief in its reality is widely distributed.[1]

Now it is clear that in early times such phenomena must have been regarded with awe and astonishment. Possession of these powers became invested with divine authority, and even the vases and stones themselves became magical objects of great value. In Egypt, as we have said, the evidence already existing indicates

[1] One of the most practical uses that has been made of the crystal and other means of divination is in connection with the discovery of thieves. For a few references to thief magic, see G. L. Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (Cambridge, Mass.), 1929, pp. 505-506. In *Occultismus und Verbrechen*, my friend Dr. A. Hellwig, the eminent German legal authority has collected and examined a few of the recent claims of mediums in the field of clairvoyance as applied to crime. See *Op. cit.* (Berlin, 1929).

that the divining vessel was not of great antiquity, and it seems that it was largely employed by unofficial magicians who, if they did not gaze themselves, acted as managers to adults or children whose visions they interpreted.

Apart from the will of the Gods as revealed in dreams and perhaps also in hallucinatory visions, there existed another method of ascertaining divine wishes which is said to go back to the time of Amenhotep III. This consisted in what appears to have been the animation of wooden statues which spoke, nodded and moved their arms. In these speaking statues we have probably the earliest examples of the so-called 'direct voice' which to-day is claimed as the actual voice of the spirit as opposed to the medium's voice when under spirit control. In ancient Egypt it seems that when the Gods were consulted their devotees gathered round the statue, which replied briefly by speech or movement and then again relapsed into immobility.[1] Spirit-

[1] See G. Maspero, "Les Statues parlantes dans l'Egypt antique" (*Jour. de Débats*, 21 Dec., 1898, 110 Année, nr. 352).

ualists doubtless will prefer to suppose that the statues were indeed animated and caused to move through supernormal agency, whilst others with Garnault[1] will prefer to consider the possibility of ventriloquism and the ingenious use of a few strings. However that may be we have little evidence of the Egyptian belief in the power of the spirits to move material objects, neither have we any proof as far as I know that the early Egyptian magician claimed to do such things by supernormal means. Such notions came later, although there is a mass of evidence that a belief in spirit possession and haunting was held at various times and in different places. Disease also was often thought to be caused by the entrance of demons through the bodily orifices and in this connection the use of amulets might be considered relevant. In order to ward off the attacks of these devils the help of magic became necessary, and thus we have a whole

[1] P. Garnault, " Histoire des Sciences. Ventriloquie, nécromancie . . ." (*Revue scientifique*, 1900, 4 Ser., xiii, 643-655).

system of magical charms and incantations revolving round the common conception of disease being due to intervention of spirits. Similarly the help of charms was sought in all cases where injury or death was to be expected and the same means were used to cause harm instead of to avert it. We must remember, as Kittredge has recently insisted, that the essence of witchcraft is a belief in *maleficium*, the working of harm which threatens the enjoyment of life. If a magician is able to control unseen powers and induce spirits to perform his will then that will may be exercised both for good and for evil. Magicians and sorcerers, wizards and witches were persecuted throughout the ages, not because they claimed to control supernormal powers but because they directed those powers towards death rather than towards life. It is the search for life which lies at the root of mankind's horror of sorcery, and if this fact be kept well before us we shall have learnt one of those great secrets through which many of the more obscure facts of civilization may be understood.

For the purpose of causing harm images made of wax and other substances were employed just as they were in Europe and as they are now in many parts of the world.

In order to cause injury to some person a wax image would be made of him and it was thought that harm done to the waxen figure would, through a doctrine of sympathy, be felt by him in whose likeness it had been made. There is a tale preserved in the Westcar Papyrus which well illustrates the magical use of wax images. A married woman fell in love with a man of lower station than her husband and determined to win his favours. On discovering the plan her husband fashioned a crocodile out of wax and then pronounced a series of spells of which the substance was a desire that the animal might devour his rival. Having completed his incantations he cast the wax model into the Nile where it became alive and as big as a living crocodile. When his wife's lover came down to bathe the crocodile seized and devoured him, whilst the unfortunate woman herself was exe-

cuted and her ashes thrown into the river.[1]

Another story tells how one of the king's officials was prosecuted for having made waxen images of human beings, and by incantations caused them bodily harm. He had learnt the spells from a book of magic, but his experiments were prematurely cut off by discovery and probably also by punishment. This case was said to have occurred during the XIX Dynasty[2] and doubtless many other examples of such incidents were known at the time.

The part played by apparitions and the ghosts of human beings who have once lived on earth is illustrated by a number of stories and legends which show how such phenomena as haunting were well known in ancient Egypt. To the ancient Egyptian the dead were just as real as they are to the spiritualist to-day. The custom of writing letters to them was wide spread and the communications were

[1] A. Erman, "Die Märchen des Papyrus Westcar" (*Mitt. aus d. Orient. Samml.*, v), Berlin, 1891, I, 8.

[2] See T. Devéria, *Le Papyrus judiciare de Turin et les Papyrus Lee et Rollin.* (Méms et frags. Bibliothéque egyptol., V.), Paris, 1897, vol. II, p. 143.

usually written on papyrus, linen or on pottery bowls. Ghosts were sometimes held responsible for the misfortunes of living people and the sufferer would therefore address an appeal either to the spirit who was supposed responsible or to some deceased friend imploring his good offices. In one of these letters a dead husband is asked not only to take action himself but to persuade a number of his dead relatives to set the law in motion against the spirit who is molesting the living, and in this case we must assume of course that the court of judgment was in the spirit world. Certain of these letters date from the Old and Middle Kingdoms, and there is little doubt that they have a long history behind them, just as to-day the ideas which inspired them still inspire those who dwell where their predecessors' material civilization has long fallen into ruins.

In a letter from a later papyrus of perhaps the XX Dynasty occurs a remarkable tale of how the spirit of a dead wife annoyed her husband. This was found tied on to a wooden portrait statue which was said to represent a lady who was a singer,

and in it the husband addresses his wife and asks what evil thing it is that he has done that he finds himself in his present unfortunate position. What is it that he has done which can explain his wife's attacks upon him if no crime has been committed against her? From the day that I became your husband, he writes, what evil have I done against you? What shall I do when I have to give an account of my actions when I appear before the judgment seat with you and address the Western Gods? If they judge you according to this writing, which are words voicing my complaint against you what will you do? I was young when you became my wife: I was promoted to dignified offices: I have been with you and did not leave you. . . The husband then goes on to speak of the visitors they have received when together and then says that as his wife has not satisfied his heart he will plead with her and separate the false from the true. He goes on to appeal to her to consider the position, and reminds her of his kindness and consideration for her when alive, reproaching her for not

recognizing the good that was done for her. Finally he recalls to her mind the care he took of her when she was ill, and the dignified appointments of her funeral. Three years has he mourned and all was done out of consideration for her, and now when he is troubled her judgment will be meted out according to the words of this indictment.[1] The troubles that wives brought upon their husbands were not confined to Egypt. There is an old Chinese story, of uncertain date, which narrates a comparable incident although accompanied with rather greater detail. Once upon a time it is said a man ill-treated his wife, finally murdering her and marrying again. Some little time afterwards the house became haunted and no servant could be induced to stay in it. The apartments occupied by the man's first wife were especially noted for the manifestations occurring there and finally they had to be shut up. One evening a friend was visiting the house, and the conversation turned upon the existence

[1] G. Maspero, *Etudes égyptiennes. Romans et poésies su Papyrus Harris No.* 500 . . . (Paris, 1879), pp. 145 ff.

of ghosts. The friend was sceptical as to the reality of haunting, but, wishing to experience something of the sort, he willingly consented to accompany his host to the haunted room. While the two were sitting there they suddenly heard the pit-pat of a woman's steps; the door opened and in walked the murdered woman in her accustomed dress. Had it not been for the law of gravity, their pigtails would have stood upright from very terror. The apparition passed over to the washstand, took up the basin and presented it to her husband; but instead of taking it he uttered a scream and fell backwards.[1] The spectre then disappeared. Subsequently the friend made inquiries, but no human being had been stirring, only a fox[2] which came

[1] Like the wife of Sir William Crookes, who when an apparition playing an accordion approached her, screamed, at which the spectre like its Chinese counterpart also disappeared. When apparitions are expected photographers are often more useful than those who are fearful of the ghostly visitants.

[2] There are many myths which connect the fox with the spirit world. A fox-elf is often thought to be responsible for taking peoples' caps and mislaying their books. There is one story of a gentleman's hat which was taken from the house

almost daily. The house was totally abandoned and it is said that from that date the man believed that the spirit of his murdered wife would torment him until he himself was dead.[1]

In another Egyptian tale, of which three fragments are preserved in faulty copies, an illustration can be seen of how the Egyptians believed that the spirits of the dead knew what was going on in the material world. It deals with the appearance of a person long dead to a high priest who may have lived in the XIX or XX Dynasty, the spirit being that of a man who lived at the end of the Middle Kingdom. The ghost complains that the condition of his tomb is ruinous, and its site neglected and forgotten. A promise is made to restore the tomb, and we must hope that the search was successful and the spirit's irritation finally appeased.[2]

he was visiting and wafted back to his own bedroom. Stories of this sort are by no means confined to the realm of myth and fable. A striking example was occurring in a private family only a few years ago in the centre of London.

[1] T. Watters, "Chinese Fox-myths" (*Jour. N. China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1874, N.S. Nr. viii) pp. 60.

[2] A. Erman, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians* (London, 1927), p. 120.

We have seen above how the ancient Egyptians regarded the world of spirits, and how their tales suggest that they experienced similar phenomena to those we hear reported to-day. The fear of the spirit, ' who comest in darkness with nose turned backward and face averted ' was a very real one, and the wandering ghosts of suicides, criminals, unburied dead and women dying in childbirth were especially to be feared. This fact reminds us of the use made of tormented spirits and their appurtenances by the magicians and sorcerers of later times

> " grease that's sweaten
> From the murderer's gibbet throw
> Into the flame."
>
> (*Macbeth*, Act iv. Sc.1.)

This idea regarding the dangers to be feared from the spirits of human beings who have died violent deaths and whose obsequies have been attended by none of those rites and ceremonies which permit of the poor souls resting in peace, is of great importance, inasmuch as it is found scattered all over the world and has always

been a pivot upon which many a magical ceremony has been made to turn.

Whilst the civilization of the Nile Valley was developing other cultures were growing up to the north of the Persian Gulf and westwards towards the northern part of Arabia between the desert and the mountains and along a strip of the Syrian coast. The ancient Sumerians were enjoying that civilization concerning which we have heard so much, and it is probable that they originally came down from the mountains to the plain. We do not know much about the beliefs and superstitions of the early inhabitants of Sumer, but it is probable that at one time their magical system reached quite a complicated stage of development. As the Semitic element filtered through and absorbed the Sumerian culture, it naturally took over a good many of the popular ideas. Thus we find that a number of the Sumerians words for ghouls, devils, etc., passed into Assyrian ; and it seems likely that in early Sumer the idea of ghosts and devils was widely spread among the population. At any rate the

development of such notions among the Babylonians and Assyrians was rapid and remarkable. We are fortunate in possessing a number of tablets illustrating their magical customs which were preserved in the great library of Ashurbanipal, who flourished towards 659 B.C. Here is displayed a wealth of material bearing upon the question of divination, magic and the world of spirits, and on consideration a few facts emerge with startling clarity.

Just as in Egypt, so also in ancient Babylonia, the practice of dream interpretation was regarded as of great importance, and similarly the use of wax images was not unknown. On some tablets in the British Museum a number of incantations and directions are inscribed to which the Assyrians gave the name of *Maḳlû* (burning), since during their recital various objects were cast into the fire and consumed for magical purposes. Thus in an incantation addressed to the Fire God it is said that the recital was to be supplemented by the burning of images made of wax, honey or bitumen, and the incantation stated that as these images quivered

and dissolved in the flames so must the wicked sorcerer or magician perish and melt away. Just as in Egypt the diviners and augurs were both official in the sense of being recognized by the state, and unofficial, so also we find the two classes in Babylonia, and we can be sure that the latter category did not always hesitate before playing upon the emotions and credulity of the common people. The interpretation of omens and portents played an important part in the early magic of Babylonia and Assyria. Seers were employed to interpret the marks on the livers of freshly-killed beasts, and their services were eagerly sought by those desirous of consulting omens.[1]

Astronomical portents also were to be feared, and a whole school of interpretation grew up around the meaning which ought to be given to odd occurrences in the natural world, such as the birth of monsters or inexplicable facts in the plant and vegetable kingdoms. Much of this ancient lore passed both eastwards

[1] Cf. H. Zimmern, *Ritualtafeln für Wahrsager, Beschwörer, und Sänger* (Leipzig, 1901), p. 82.

and westwards, surviving even now in many parts of the world. The Etruscans paid so much attention to the markings on livers that the organ became a kind of priestly trade mark, and it may be that from the Etruscans hepatoscopy (divination through the liver) made its way into civilizations of Greece and Rome. Even to-day this kind of divination may be still carried out by primitive peoples, for travellers have reported the custom from Borneo, Africa and Burma. Again demonology was widely studied and according to ancient Babylonian beliefs the world of demons and spirits was a very real one as it still is to Catholics to-day. We saw how in earlier times the spirit world was regarded as being inhabited by various classes of entities. Here again the divisions were similar and as before we find a great fear of the ghosts of such unfortunate mortals as suicides and of those whose burial rites were not carried out in accordance with their wishes. For when libations are not poured and offerings are not made, ghosts are apt to return " to demand the

payment of rites and the pouring of libations they have come forth from the grave . . ."[1] Not only did such angry spirits return to demand their just dues, but also the popular magicians called up such ghosts for the purposes of their trade. Indeed the title of " Raiser of Departed Spirits " was the recognized name for the Assyrian sorcerer. The spirit when it appeared is variously depicted in the ancient literature. Ea-bani, the strong hairy dweller in the wilds, when he is described in the Gilgamesh legend às being raised up, is said to come like a breath of wind, a transparent spectre in human shape. This mention of wind reminds one of the common accounts of cold breezes being felt at the appearance of spectres to-day, and which are said to accompany them when they arise spontaneously or when they are seen at experimental séances.

Another class of supernatural visitor was the spirit who had never occupied a human body, but who nevertheless was

[1] R. C. Thompson, *Semitic Magic* (London, 1908), p. 7.

greatly to be dreaded. These hideous spirits were supposed to haunt dark corners, ruins and similar melancholy spots. They used even to attack domestic animals in the byres and stalls ; and like vampires were often credited with the passion for sucking the blood of living creatures and thus satisfying their thirst for life. When entering houses they were especially to be feared—

" Driving the maiden from her chamber,
Sending the man forth from his home,
Expelling the son from the house of his father,
Hustling the pigeons from their cotes,
Driving the bird from its nest,
Making the swallow fly forth from its hole,
Smiting both oxen and sheep."[1]

It was quite natural that such spirits should be feared, for when they entered houses these would often be destroyed, and the wise diviners of Assyria deduced many an omen from their conduct and behaviour. Thus it was considered very important if

[1] R. C. Thompson, *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia* (London, 1903-1904), p. 33.

the ghost spoke, whilst its actions over or under the bed were interpreted according to the dictates of popular superstition. How well we can picture these frightened men of old as they tried to explain according to their knowledge, those odd manifestations over and under the bed. We may regard such stories as due to preposterous superstitions of a people not yet blessed with the conveniences of modern civilization. Yet such an idea would hardly do justice to the facts. These curious events are reported to-day in houses with electric light and modern sanitation, just as they were thousands of years ago in the mud dwellings of ancient Babylonia, and our interpretations do not, after all, differ so fundamentally from those of our predecessors. It is not that the sensation of bedshakings are only experienced by the uneducated laymen or by hysterical patients. What are we to say for example of the records of these inexplicable phenomena when they are felt by an investigator like my friend Dr. Walter Franklin Prince, who has described them as occurring to himself on a great number of occasions.

Within a few moments of lying down, the shaking would begin, he says, and it would gradually increase for three or four minutes and then die down. On another occasion the same eminent and extremely capable observer felt five vigorous pokes from beneath the bed and quite seriously he inquires, " What do you know about that ? "[1] Men have been asking the meaning of these things ever since they first happened milleniums ago. No satisfactory answer has yet been given and none can ever be given until the scientific method of inquiry has been applied to these problems, and a clear line of demarcation established between the objective and subjective material.

Another kind of Babylonian demon which was credited with wide powers and which is still believed in to-day, is that

[1] W. F. Prince, *The Psychic in the House* (Boston, 1926), pp. 91, 98. For a short summary and criticism of this important work, see my review in the *Proceedings S.P.R.*, 1926-1928 (1926), xxxvi, pp. 379-387. Perhaps the reader would prefer Simon Uckley, Professor of Arabic at Cambridge from 1711 to 1720 : " I felt him moving under the bed and heaving it up " (*Brit. Jour. of Psych. Res.*, 1929, II, 173).

which is half human and half devil and which materializes in human shape and has sexual intercouse with human beings (*Incubi* (m) and *Succubae* (f)). Stories of the exploits of these beings have an exceedingly wide distribution, and offer an interesting commentary on the importance of erotic phantasies and the expression of wish-fulfilment. Their reality has been asserted by a long line of Christian theologians and a Bull of Innocent VIII (1484-1492) states the fact without any ambiguity. Similarly we shall see how the idea was developed in Greece and Rome and how many curious and amusing tales and anecdotes are preserved which illustrate this fantastic notion of spiritual lechery.

Just as in ancient Egypt it was thought that diseases were caused by the action of evil spirits, so also in Babylonia the idea was prevalent and long continued. Charms could be wrought which could do untold harm and which could only be averted or rendered innocuous by counter-charms, amulets or magical ceremonies. Throughout all these rites the desire for

life stands out, for Life in its broadest sense, since death was regarded more as an accident than the inevitable lot of every human being. If there is one fact in the study of magic, witchcraft, demonology and spiritualism which stands out more than any other, it is this craving for life and security and the turning away of any influence which might be thought to menace safety and happiness. It is thus that magic grew and flourished, and it is the same factor to-day which leads men to seek out the wizards that peep and that mutter in order to try and persuade themselves that death is not the end but that renewed life awaits them after their material eyes have closed for ever in their last long sleep.

The history of ancient Jewish magic and divination is similar to that of Egypt and Babylonia in many respects. There seems some reason to suppose that the larger part of Jewish magic was derived from Egypt, whilst the various methods of divination were much influenced by Babylonian thought, Hellenism acting as a connecting link. According to the

Talmud Egypt was the home of witchcraft, and many forms of magical ceremonies known to the Jews exhibit an obvious connection with the Nile Valley. Biblical records are full of allusions to magical processes and ceremonies in which divination played a leading part, and there we shall see that both witch and wizard are often threatened with dire penalties for practising their arts. Divination by means of a *cup* is found mentioned in Gen. xliv, 5, 15, where the vessel is said to be used for both drinking and divining. Filled with liquid these cups would perhaps be employed for the purpose of gazing in order to induce hallucinatory visions or pictures, and it is said that during the service of *Habdalah* traces of this form of divination can still be discerned. At one period of the service the celebrant gazes into a vessel of wine, and later there is a reminder of the ancient form of finger-nail divination, for the light from a candle is allowed to fall upon the nails which are then examined intently. Astrological divination was also known, but it is probable that necromancy,

although not common, was the most striking method of attempting to read the future and the signs of the times. Whatever may be the true interpretation of the story of the Witch of Endor it is clear that on this occasion an attempt was made to conjure up the spirits of the dead, although the method by which the manifestation was produced is still in dispute. Some writers do not favour the idea that the woman of Endor was possessed by a 'Control' in the sense that the modern spiritualist uses that term. It is thought that the witch possessed some mysterious object such as a mummified head or part of some preserved human body which, when properly prepared, became a means for successful divination. At any rate the story will bear re-telling, and indeed could hardly be omitted in any treatment of the beginnings of spiritualism.

After the death of Samuel and the preparations of the Philistines to gain supremacy over the Israelites, Saul learnt one day that the approaching battle could not much longer be delayed. When he saw the hosts of his enemies he became

fearful and his heart sank within him. Desirous of learning what fate had in store for him he made haste to inquire of the Lord, but his dreams told him nothing, neither did the examination of the Urim offer any result. This latter method of divination, which was often coupled with the Thummin, may have been either connected with the drawing of lots or perhaps the words imply certain jewels which were used for the purpose of clairvoyance or for causing appearances which were then interpreted. At any rate all these methods had failed him, so he told his servants to go and try to find a woman who had the power of divination. When they returned they told him that such a woman could be found at Endor, some few miles distant, a place which was noted for its caverns where possibly the witch had fitted up a den for the purpose of holding séances. Disguising himself, Saul, accompanied by two of his companions, came stealthily to the place by night and asked the woman to call up that spirit whom he should name.

We can well imagine the scene. Before

the dark entrance of the cave the witch was possibly sitting, her head propped up on her hands as she scrutinised her visitors. In front of her stood Saul and his companions, nervous and irritable, whilst at any moment they may have expected some hideous shape to emerge from the depths of the gloomy cavern. At first the woman was loth to do Saul's bidding for she reminded her visitor of the king's orders whereby all wizards and witches were to be rooted out of the land. But Saul reassured her and promised her that no harm should come to her and he again asked her to call up the spirit and then named Samuel as the one for whom he had come. Mollified, the witch then set about her business, and when Samuel came and she saw him, then the identity of her visitor flashed before her, and she turned upon the king and upraided him for his duplicity. But Saul brushed aside her remonstrances for one question only was paramount in his mind. "What seest thou?" he says, and she replies, "I see a god coming up out of the earth", and then Saul asks her to describe the

apparition. When she does so Saul also recognized Samuel and bows his face to the ground.

We do not know how the apparition conversed with the king; whether some independent voice made itself heard or whether the witch interpreted certain sounds or merely acted herself as interpreter for an inner voice. But it is said that Samuel asked Saul why the latter had disturbed him, and then the king poured out all his troubles, complaining that all other means of divination had failed him. In reply the Prophet informed the king that his days were numbered and that the Lord was about to deliver him into the hands of the Philistines. But even something more terrible was to follow. Samuel announced that his fate was near, and at even on the morrow both Saul and his sons would be with him, mere shadows in a world of Shades. At these awful words Saul was completely prostrated. Half starved from want of food and racked by nervous anxiety, he found this climax to a rather terrifying experience too much for him. "There

was no strength in him ", we are told, and it is not difficult to believe. The witch, seeing the state to which her tidings had reduced the king, set meat before him and his servants and they did eat and then they rose up and went away the same night.

Next day in the great battle which was fought Saul was wounded almost to death, and implored his armour-bearer to put him out of his misery. But his servant refused and so the king fell upon his own sword, and his three sons with him. Thus it came to pass that the sentence of death which was pronounced at Endor was fulfilled to the letter.

Apart from divination Jewish magic was founded, as in so many other cases, upon a system of demonology, which was undoubtedly derived in part at least from Babylonia. Although witchcraft is not mentioned many times in the Bible the passages where it is noted suggest a connection with both idolatry and lewdness, the latter being commonly associated with witchcraft in the later stages of this widespread belief.

From what we know of the beliefs of the people in lands further east it would appear that similar systems of spiritualism and demonology were to be found at an early date. For example in India the origin of a belief in the power of demons seems to be independent of Brahmanism or orthodox Hinduism; and although in the Vedic period much stress does not seem to have been laid on the hostility of unseen powers, in later times the Gods waged incessant war against the Demons. As time went on the demon world became thickly populated. As elsewhere there were both non-human and human spirits, the latter comprising many of those men who had suffered violent deaths, or had been deformed, insane or drunken during life. The spirit of *maleficium* is again always prevalent: the wish of the spirits is to afflict the living who must appease them. A similar wish to obviate misfortunes, which may be the direct consequences of various omens and portents, is the basis of Indian divination, which again can be traced back to the Vedic period, and in one domestic manual of the

Atharvaveda details are given as to the methods then in use. Later, with Hellenic influence astrology was introduced and with it a knowledge of the magic of the west.

Although perhaps there should be little connection between Buddhism and magic, yet the occult arts are not wholly unknown to Buddhists. Concentration and the power of thought must have been early insisted upon as methods whereby supernormal powers could be obtained, but at the same time stress was laid upon the fact that by themselves miracles were useless and a parade of supernormal faculties was discouraged. The attitude of ancient India regarding 'psychic' phenomena is reflected in the modern movements which claim as their foundations the wisdom and lore of the East. The leaders of these cults scorn any attempt to prove the validity of their powers, and it is well known that many of them claim the most astounding supernormal faculties. They treat any suggestion, however tactfully given, that a scientific examination of their claims might be of interest, as a proposal verging

on the blasphemous. Such an attitude is very convenient, since it prevents any exposure of their pretensions, and at the same time strengthens their position and furthers their desire to be considered 'holy men' whose powers are not to be subjected to the vulgar scrutiny of the unbelieving and materialistic scientist.

Similarly with regard to occult sciences in Tibet, it is not easy to bring them within the range of organized knowledge, on account of the resistance that is encountered when attempts at examination are made. Perhaps the most important body of material in this region is the *Bardo Thodol*, or Liberation by Hearing on the After-Death Plane. It consists of a kind of mystic guide to the Other World, and as such resembles the Egyptian Book of the Dead. Although the MSS are not of early date it may have been originally committed to writing in the ninth century A.D., but there can be little doubt that the conceptions embodied therein go back to a much earlier date. One of the most important ideas which has long been known in the East is the power of Mind

and its enormous influence in the Universe. In the words of the Tibetan scholar Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup, " In the boundless panorama of the existing and visible universe, whatever shapes appear, whatever sounds vibrate, whatever radiances illuminate, or whatever consciousnesses cognize, all are the play or manifestation of the Tri-Kaya, the Three-fold Principle of the Cause of All Causes, the Primordial Trinity. Impenetrating all, is the All-Pervading Essence of Spirit, which is Mind. It is uncreated, impersonal, self-existing, immaterial, and indestructible ".[1] This view of Mind is naturally responsible for a number of the ideas relating to the powers which can be obtained by the proper development of the mental faculties. The visions which are unfolded after death in a mighty panorama partake of the nature of thought-forms, and it is only gradually that the deceased person becomes aware that he is what the world calls ' dead ', and that he has no longer a body made of flesh and blood as on the

[1] W. Y. Evans-Wentz, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Oxford, 1927), p. 13.

earth plane. This discovery is believed to be an important factor in the process of rebirth, since the intense desire to possess an instrument of self-expression to which the individual had been accustomed is a potent factor in the return to another incarnation. Similarly comes the realization that the world beyond physical death is a world which is largely the result of the mental outlook of the deceased. The visions of the Other World have no external reality. They are the results of the seers own thoughts and beliefs : what a man thinks that will he see. Thus experiences after death are in the nature of dreams, and the creator of the shadow world is the dreamer himself. The aim of the *Bardo Thödol* teaching appears to be to cause the dreamer to become aware of his condition and to awaken into a reality which is far beyond all the worlds to which men have become accustomed through the teachings of the creeds.

Thus it will be seen that to such who hold the doctrines of the Mahayana School the ordinary phenomena of spiritualism have but little interest. A reality

apart from mind has no existence, the rarer manifestations of the creative mental power have little importance to him who is striving to obtain mastery over the illusions which surround him. As Ashvaghosha wrote : " When the finite mind ceases to act, then all kinds of things cease ".[1]

As in Babylonia so in China we find a land which from time immemorial has been infested with spirits and demons. Two main varieties can again be distinguished ; those who were once incarnate upon earth and those who never possessed human bodies at any period of their existence. Demonology and spiritism are so widespread in China and have for so many centuries exercised a profound influence upon the minds of her people, that it is not easy to select examples from the mass of valuable material that lies at our disposal.

Divination in China perhaps goes back as far as 1125 B.C. and a variety of different methods have been described. Similarly communication with spirits of the dead

[1] W. Y. Evans-Wentz, *Op. cit.*, p. 227.

has been practised for centuries, and indeed spiritualistic séances among the Chinese are so like those to-day among modern Western peoples that it may be of interest if we glance at a few of the stories and reports which have been published concerning them. We cannot hope to understand the meaning and development of modern spiritistic practices unless we possess some acquaintance with the methods by which men of old sought to pierce the Veil. It is not sufficient to have knowledge merely of one or the other. The two are complementary : the West has scarcely added to the knowledge that the East has handed on. Communication with the spirit world has, it appears, been actively carried on in China since at least the first or second century before the Christian era, and the probability is that in its origins the practice goes back to an earlier date. Moreover the methods do not seem to have been radically changed as the centuries passed. Three main kinds of such communications are to be distinguished. There is the method by which the spirit makes known his wishes

through the use of special apparatus, which corresponds to our planchette and ouija board; then there is the simple method of direct control of the medium and the use of his vocal organs; and finally there is the method by which the spirit actually speaks in the air or sends a message by means of direct writing on paper, or other material. Apart from the apparatus used for divination such as the so-called divining block, the most important device used for spirit communication was called the *ki*, and in its developed form is probably at least as old as the first century A.D. A forked piece of wood is first of all cut from the side of a tree, exposed to the rising and setting sun and thus imbued with the light of life, a quality to which further power is added by painting the apparatus a deep crimson. The fork is about 18 inches long and just above where division occurs is a short projection or stump with which markings on sand are to be made. In order to use the apparatus the medium and his assistant each hold one of the arms and the spirits are asked to communicate. The sitters politely

demand the name of the communicator and occasionally the place of birth and other particulars are given. Finally a message is delivered, the scrawl being interpreted for the sitter and noted down. Occasionally the writing is upside down and in the wrong sequence ; and now and then mischievous spirits communicate who write nonsense and give false information which is called " playing fast and loose with the *ki* ". A variation of the device consists of having a pencil or other writing instrument tied on to the stump and similarly additions were made as the years went by. It is said that the house of Ming produced an emperor who was so much addicted to this means of communication that he had a special little terrace built for the purpose of consulting the *ki*.

The trance mediums are well described in Chinese literature. When spirit control is imminent the medium becomes drowsy : his eyes stare fixedly and shivering and groaning often set in. Resting his arms on some supporting surface his head sinks upon them as if he is asleep. But suddenly

he jumps up with shaking limbs and jerking head and a stream of almost unintelligible words pour from his lips, which are interpreted by his friends. The spirit is in control.

In direct writing, messages are said to be delivered without any human intervention, and there is a story about 650 A.D. which tells how during a sitting the spirits wrote on paper which, apparently for a test had been put in another room, a phenomenon which has often been reported both in Europe and elsewhere.

Chinese mediums make the same claims as their European brethren, telepathy and clairvoyant powers being well known to them. A man once consulted a famous medium and the latter is said to have proved herself capable of revealing anything her sitters wanted to know. In fact she read peoples' thoughts quite as well as Professor Gilbert Murray is said to read them to-day. Some guests in the house, who happened to be playing a board game, counted out some of the white and black pieces and held them concealed in their hands. The medium was asked to

give the numbers of the counters and every time she was correct. But when the players took handfuls of counters without counting them, she failed, and passed on to describe the contents of certain closed boxes in which apparently she was more successful.

This capacity for clairvoyant vision through opaque objects was well known in China, and just as to-day, use was made of it for the purpose of diagnosing disease, the body being rendered transparent to these gifted seers.

Those of us who are acquainted with modern spiritualism will remember how mediums are often credited with producing writings which in literary style are superior to that which they can normally pen. There are for example Mrs. Pearl L. Curran, of St. Louis, whose literary compositions under the Control of ' Patience Worth ' have intrigued so many psychologists ; Miss G. Cummins, whose scripts of ' Cleophas ' puzzle even Christian divines ; Mrs. Dowden, and the modest ' Mr. V. ', who bring Oscar Wilde and Margaret Veley back to us from the

past. These things used to be well known in China. It is said that some nine hundred years ago a girl in the family of one Wang Lun was controlled by a spirit or spirits, who caused her to write in several different styles and manifest great artistic skill. She was a very powerful medium and one of the spirits controlling her sometimes became visible during her séances for materializations. They must have really been very impressive, and resembled sittings which the English medium, D. D. Home, used to give in London drawing-rooms. On one occasion she materialized the upper part of a beautiful woman whose lower extremities were veiled in a cloud-like formation. This form moved about the room, playing a sweet melody upon a lute, thus demonstrating its living character just as ' Katie King ' did to Sir William Crookes and ' Bien Boa ' to Professor Richet.

Neither did China lack mediums for telekinesis, or the alleged movements of objects without normal contact. Pots and pans danced in ancient China just as they did in Europe and still do all over

the world. The Chinese sorcerers could well echo the words that old Bishop Bale (1495-1563) put into the mouth of the Idolator in his *Newe Comedy or Enterlude*,

" I can make stoles to daunce,
And earthen pottes to praunce ",

and the stone throwings, and tremblings of images and statues, and falling over of objects at deaths, were just as well known then as now and almost as fully recorded. Sometimes indeed the spirits who did these things were made visible to mortal eyes. Spectral warriors were seen in China thirteen hundred years before they were seen at Mons ; and ghostly visitors often remained visible for longer periods than they do now. In fact nowadays they seem to be getting a little shy, which is unfortunate when we consider the advances made in photography. Cold breezes and raps heralded their approach then as they do to-day, but I have never heard of a modern spirit which remained glaring at a gentleman until in a fit of rage he threw a tureen of hot soup over it. Yet this is what a high official of the Tan

dynasty is reported to have done, and the tale is no whit less curious than the story of the importunate husband, which goes back to about 818 A.D., and is preserved in a quaint old book called *The Record of the Strange Things I have Heard.*

The authorship of the book seems to be uncertain, but the tale loses nothing thereby. Once upon a time a certain man was drowned, and the same day he suddenly appeared at home to his wife who was sitting in the house. The same thing happened upon several subsequent occasions, and his wife grew so frightened that she asked the servants to stay with her. In spite of the presence of the maids, however, the phantasm continued to appear, and one day when his wife was alone the spirit of her dead husband entered the maids' apartment, knocked over their spinning wheels, pulled their clothes, and pushed them all down on the ground. On another occasion the son of the house was hungry and asked for something to eat, but his mother replied that there was no food in the house. The phantasm which was present immediately

disappeared, but soon came back with 200 pieces of money which he presented to his impoverished wife.

It is possible that the attentive husband may have had good reason for his noisy and rude behaviour, but none could be found for the mischievous pranks of some wicked poltergeist which disturbed the serenity of a religious institution in China and whose exploits were committed to writing about a thousand years ago in a little book entitled *Gossip from the Jade Hall*. The disturbances began by bits of pots flying about and dust being thrown into the air. An exorcist attempted to still the noisy spirits, but instead of being good they turned their attention to himself. His cap was pulled off and thrown over the wall; his robe was loosened, and even his trousers pulled off, which latter event caused him to retire precipitately and doubtless in deep humiliation. Others tried where he failed, but they were rewarded for their pains by a rain of insolent missives from the air upon which were written words of malice and bitter odium. We do not

know how it all ended. Probably things gradually grew quiet again, just as they did in the case of the impudent devil of Mascon and in one of the author's own cases where stones fell from unexpected places and spirit messages dropped from heaven.[1]

Although spiritistic phenomena in ancient China seem to have been as plentiful as in modern Europe it must not be supposed that acceptance of their reality was universal. In the first century of our era lived Wang Ch'ung, a sceptical philosopher, who attacked both Confucius and Mencius and of whose works only one has apparently survived. It is not certain, I think, how far Wang Ch'ung was a believer in the spirit world. His views however, on apparitions and the poltergeist seem to be quite plain. He denied that disembodied human souls could act as mischievous goblins, or that apparitions could be really the souls of dead men. How is it, he asks, that

[1] The most convenient authority for spiritism in China is J. J. M. de Groot's *The Religious System of China* (Leyden, 1892-1910) from which the majority of the above incidents are taken.

spirits only appear now and then and not in legions? The soul, he thinks, is so intimately bound up with the body that no intelligence can possibly remain in a being whose internal organs have rotted away together with his whole body. Disembodied spirits cannot harm the living, he declares. An infant can do more harm than a spirit since it has at least limbs and a few teeth. These apparitions we hear so much of are mere products of fiction: phantasms hatched by human brains, especially by those of the sick. The words of Wang Ch'ung are startlingly modern both in their theoretical and practical applications. The tendency to explain all such phenomena by an appeal to imagination and hysteria showed itself in the early history of criticism and has been continued down to modern times. How far such objections are valid must be left to the judgment of each individual student; but it ought to be said that no theoretical discussion of the earlier cases is complete without careful consideration of later instances as they present themselves to

men and women to-day, whose outlook on spiritual affairs is very different from that of the first century of our era.

So elusive and difficult to investigate are these queer manifestations that our knowledge of them has not materially increased since the day Wang Ch'ung doubted their reality. It may be that the Chinese philosopher was partly right. It is certain that he was not so entirely, and it remains for science to determine exactly how far the scales can be tipped in his favour. The time has long passed when opinions on these matters can be expressed without due inquiry and experiment. A dispassionate and impartial investigation is required, and when this is carried out with all the resources that modern science can command, it will be time enough to consider the question afresh in the light of the knowledge that such an inquiry will throw into the darkness that has prevailed over so many centuries.

SPIRITUALISM IN THE CLASSICS

In the previous chapter we have seen how the belief in magic and the world of spirits grew and prospered in the ancient Orient. We have now to turn our attention to Europe and observe the beliefs flourishing in the advanced civilizations of Greece and Rome. It will not be profitable to attempt to disentangle the indigenous elements from the immense mass of complicated beliefs which clustered around the magic art. We can be sure that the culture of the East influenced Greece and Rome in this matter as it did in other elements of civilization. It merely remained for the genius of the peoples to mould the ideas and conceptions into a form more in keeping with their own individual character.

One difficulty which confronts us immediately is the differentiation between magic and religion. In the Graeco-Roman world there was no hard and fast

line which could be said to divide sharply the domain of magic from that of religion. The only reasonable means of distinguishing the one from the other was that of official recognition ; and by this we mean the recognition of magical beliefs and practices by the State. Thus we have within the boundaries of orthodoxy a mass of obscure magical ideas which found expression in ceremonial ritual ; and without the more elementary magical rites which became associated with the heterodox wonder-worker and often the clever charlatan. In the period of its greatest vigour Graeco-Roman magic and its mysterious operations were familiar to all classes of the community. Even the most educated class shared such beliefs, and only a few of the more enlightened of the population indicated by their writings their growing unbelief in the occurrence of the miraculous. Divination itself, free in Greece, was a corporate part of the Roman official cult ; and Cicero, when dealing with this question, hinted that augury, being part of the Roman constitution was a good

means of controlling democracy even though it was possibly false in its fundamental principles.

We cannot deal here with the bulk of beliefs which are comprised under the term magic in Greece and Rome. Similar marvellous stories of miracles in the East to which we have listened are met with in the literature of Greece and Rome, and also in the writings of those ecclesiastical historians who contributed scathing indictments of the old paganism. Nodding statues, the use of wax images, and devices for assisting divination are all to be found, and we can hardly doubt that many of them were borrowed directly and incorporated into the prevailing system. Our purpose here is rather to collect some examples of those phenomena which can be more properly called spiritualistic, and see how the ancient writers of the Graeco-Roman world regarded occurrences which are commonly reported even at the present day.

Among the most important of those operations for which the magician was responsible was the raising up of the ghosts

of the dead to do his bidding. In modern times the spirits of the dead are sought mainly for the purpose of comforting those who are left, or of giving information which is urgently required. But in olden times necromancy was employed rather as a powerful aid to magical ceremonies, although many cases exist in which the dead were called up with the object of asking them questions. Thus in the famous passage in Homer where Odysseus descends into the Under World the dead rise to reply to his request. The story tells how, after he had freed his companions from the wiles of Circe he sailed across the Oceanus and landed in the mist-shrouded country of the Cimmerians. Here, accompanied by his two friends, Perimedes and Eurylochus, he began to dig a deep trench, and when it was sufficiently sunk poured therein a drink-offering of mead, wine and water. He then called up the dead to hear his words; and forthwith the sheep which Odysseus had brought with him were slain and their dark blood flowed into the trench. Excited by the blood and

by the drink-offering the ghosts of the dead rose up—men and women, youths and maidens, all flocked together from every side about the trench, and fear seized Odysseus when he perceived so many phantoms. The scene recalls to our minds all those age-long beliefs concerning the efficacy of the pouring of libations and the offering of blood. As Holy Writ has it, " The blood is the life " (Deut. xii, 23), and what more natural than to suppose that, since at death the body loses its natural juices and by its pallor indicates its loss of blood, it is only necessary to restore these vital elements in order to reanimate the corpse and so " this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality " (I Cor. xvi, 54).[1]

Thus when Odysseus had poured the blood into the trench the shades of the Under World hurried to the spot to slake their thirst in that life-giving pool, and to snatch a few moments of life at the

[1] Professor Elliot Smith has worked over certain material relating to this theme in a most suggestive essay printed in his *Evolution of the Dragon* (Manchester, 1919), pp. 1-75.

cost of again meeting those who had not yet passed below to join them. But Odysseus wished principally to hold converse with Teiresias, the mighty soothsayer of ancient times, and therefore he prevented the dead from approaching their feast until the magician should appear. First of all came one of his former companions, Elpenor by name, who described how he met his end on earth and how finally he passed into the shadow world below. Then Anticleia, the mother of Odysseus appeared, and he was moved by compassion for her condition and was sore grieved in spirit, but suffered her not to approach the blood, for Teiresias had not yet risen. But finally he came, that famous seer of old, bearing his golden sceptre in his hand, and approached Odysseus, bidding him put up his sword into its sheath so that he could come and drink of the blood which lay in the trench. After he had satisfied his desire, and felt the tide of strength flowing again within him, he spoke and prophesied of future things and in wise oracles tendered his advice. When he had with-

drawn, the mother of Odysseus again drew nigh, and after she had drunk of the vital fluid she addressed her son in wingéd words. By her speech she showed that she had knowledge of things on earth and kept in touch with the world of living men. So excited was Odysseus that he would fain have embraced her, but when he sprang forward to fulfil his desire she eluded his grasp and passed away even as a shadow or a dream. When she had gone, the hosts of the dead came near and many were questioned by Odysseus, until finally fear beset him, so that he left the place, and joined his ship, which set sail and passed away over the glittering seas.

The conception of the world of spirits as the Under World was firmly established in the East long before the classical period in Greece. This old Egyptian idea had been widely held at one time and it had spread far beyond the confines of the Nile Valley. The Egyptian had taught the necessity and desirability of reanimation through the restoration of the vital elements lost at death, and there can be no doubt that this teaching had an

enormous effect upon subsequent doctrines. Savage customs in connection with occult ceremonies are not mere meaningless actions which have been spontaneously invented by those practising them. If we know something of anthropology, the subject of occultism is seen to fall into place along with other branches of human endeavour, and the seemingly absurd and unrelated theories and processes become less arbitrary when viewed in their historical setting.

We have seen above how necromancy was regarded in the Homeric poem. The view is typical of the period and the same idea was exemplified in all kinds of literature and dramatic art. To illustrate their ascent from the Under World, the spirits of the dead when represented in the theatre mounted a staircase in order to reach the stage.

Apart however from the regular methods of the necromancer spiritualistic phenomena were not unknown to the classical writers. There are a number of examples to be found, and of these it may be of interest to select a certain number of

incidents which throw considerable light upon the experiences both of the educated and common people as well as upon the stories which were circulated at the time.

Let us start with haunted houses, which are not modern inventions as some people suppose but, as we have seen, go right back to Egyptian times. They appear to have been well known some time before the Christian era, for Plautus, the famous Roman comic poet, who flourished about 200 B.C. wrote a comedy called *Mostellaria*, or Haunted House. In it he tells the story of how a certain Theopropides left his house one day in the charge of his son Philolaches, who secretly was very glad, as he meant to have a good time. No sooner had the old man taken his departure than all was excitement within the house. The reception rooms became the scenes of much jovial mirth, and what with his girls and his wine Philolaches thoroughly enjoys himself and spends money like water, so much so indeed that he becomes practically penniless. When his father returns home he is told that a terrible thing has happened.

The house has become haunted by apparitions and it is impossible for the family to stay in it. The old man is furious, suspecting another reason for the ruin of his home, but after discovering the plot he finally becomes reconciled and the play ends happily.

It is clear that such a comedy as this would have had no meaning if the audience had not been able to appreciate the scheme of the plot, which centred around the pretended haunting. Other references to such houses, where the haunting does not seem to have been of such a fictional character, occur in some of the later authors. Thus in the letters of Pliny the Younger, who flourished towards 70 A.D., is to be found a document addressed to Sura in which he describes a haunted house in Athens. It appears that within that city was a certain mansion which had an evil reputation and was even considered pestilential. Stories were told how in the dead of night noises like the clanging of iron were frequently heard, which, if careful attention was paid, seemed like the rattling of fetters. When first heard

the sound seemed a long way off, but it gradually grew louder and after a time the phantom itself became visible. Squalid in appearance, the apparition revealed itself as that of a thin old man with long beard and bristling hair, whilst upon both hands and feet hung the shackles of the prison house. So often did this ghost make itself seen and heard that the tenants of the house became ill, and some exhibited such mental distress that they actually succumbed. Finally everybody went away : the house was left deserted and a board outside announced that the mansion was to be let or sold.

It so chanced that about that time a certain philosopher named Athenodorus came to Athens, and passing the house happened to see the notice board and consequently repaired to the agent to inquire the price. Slightly suspicious of the unexpected cheapness of the property, he nevertheless signed a contract and became the tenant. As his first night in the house approached he resolved to spend it in writing, but when it grew dark he was soon disturbed by the unusual clanking

sounds he heard in the distance. Being however a reasonable man and not given to superstition, he continued his work until the noise grew louder and finally seemed to be in the room. Turning round he thereupon perceived the phantom beckoning to him. No whit alarmed, and not proposing to be disturbed, Athenodorus made a sign to the apparition to wait and continued his writing, but the phantom rattled its chains and again beckoned to him. The philosopher therefore took up his lamp and drew near to the figure, which turned, and, followed by Athenodorus, went into the courtyard of the house, where it disappeared. The philosopher, being of a practical turn of mind and a man who recognized the duty of experiment, marked the spot with some leaves and grass and returned to the house. Next day he went to certain of the magistrates of the city and suggested to them that it might be advisable to dig up the spot where the phantom had disappeared. Accordingly this was done and a number of bones were discovered surrounded by chains. These were col-

lected and decently buried, and it is said that from that moment the haunting ceased.

In recording this incident Pliny asks Sura to consider the facts, and says that they merit prolonged and profound consideration, an opinion still held by many educated people who both experience phenomena similar to those observed by Athenodorus, and also listen to stories resembling his from all parts of the world.

Another almost identical tale forms part of one of Lucian's amusing dialogues. Tychiades and Philocles are conversing together on the question of how it is that men prefer lies to truth, and have such a pronounced partiality for what we should call 'tough yarns'. It appeared that many of their own friends belonged to this category, and the reader will doubtless be able to number among his own acquaintances a few specimens of this class. While the company was talking Eucrates was introduced. He was a venerable old gentleman of sixty and had a remarkable knowledge of the spirit world; indeed he might have stepped

straight out of a spiritualistic meeting in London. He declared that he had seen thousands of apparitions both by day and by night, and sometimes the statue in the courtyard of his house used to come down from its pedestal and walk about, whilst occasionally it actually could be heard splashing about in the bath. Again, seven days after the death of his wife, she appeared to him, and complained that when her effects were destroyed one of her golden sandals was forgotten. It had fallen underneath a chest, she said, and as a matter of fact it had been mislaid as the apparition averred. Unfortunately at that moment a dog, which was under the sofa, barked and the apparition melted away; but on search being made the missing sandal was discovered and destroyed.

As they were thus conversing Arignotus the Pythagorean entered and Eucrates explained to him that he was trying to convince Tychiades, that sceptical man of adamant, of the existence of spirits and supernormal phenomena. How well we can picture the scene. It must have

been like a meeting of a society for psychical research. Here were a number of venerable and serious-looking people telling each other stories one after the other and impatient of any critic who ventured to submit a reasoned objection. Here was old Arignotus, with his long hair and profound expression who, when some mild scepticism was shown, immediately rejoined, "What, you deny the existence of the supernatural, when there is scarcely a man alive who has not met with some evidence for it!" and then to clinch matters the garrulous old man began the story of the haunted house in Corinth which ought to provide enough evidence to satisfy anybody. He related how Eubatides expelled the spirit which was black in colour and had masses of tangled hair upon its head. Armed with the sure defence of an Egyptian adjuration this bold investigator faced the phantom which promptly disappeared in a corner. Later a little excavation took place in that same corner. A mouldering corpse was discovered, and when removed and buried decently the trouble ceased.

Even in those days the practical joker was not unknown. A story is told of how on one occasion a number of bright young people dressed up in black cloaks with skull-like masks tried to frighten a certain Democritus, who evidently did not belong to the spiritualistic societies of his day. For without even looking up from his papers in order to glance at the young peoples' fancy dresses, he merely called out, " Come, come, enough of that nonsense ! "

Among the more serious students of early times was the great orator, Marcus Tullius Cicero, who was born in 106 B.C. In his important treatise on divination he gave a vivid picture of the beliefs and superstitions of his day, and the document is one of the first examples of how reasonable men approached the problems of spiritualism as they presented themselves for solution. Cicero divides the practice of divination into two main varieties. There is, he says, that form which can be called *artificial*, comprising such things as taking the auspices, divination by portents and such like ; and then

there is a kind which can be called *natural* in which men give forth utterances when they are in a state of frenzy or trance. In dealing with these classes of phenomena Cicero adopts methods which can be confidently recommended to-day. The dialogue takes place between Quintus Cicero and Marcus Cicero, and Quintus begins by relating a number of instances which go to prove the reality of divination and the supernatural world. One of these tales gives a clear picture of the kind of narrative which might almost be one of the common stock of every spiritualistic speaker.

Two travellers voyaging together came one evening to the city of Megara. One of them put up at a local inn, whilst the other, having friends in the place, preferred to ask them for hospitality. Having found his friends at home and being provided with a bed, he dreams that his friend at the inn is calling for help as the host has planned to get rid of him. Alarmed at the realistic nature of the dream he gets up, but soon goes back to bed. On falling asleep again, he dreams

that his friend appears to him, and tells him that, since he has refused help, the host's murderous plan has succeeded, adding sarcastically that perhaps he will see that he is buried decently. He goes on to say that after his death his body was thrown into a waggon, and if his friend is at the town gate in the morning he will be able to intercept the cart before it leaves the city. Now thoroughly alarmed his friend decided to do as he was bid, and met the cart next morning as had been foretold. Inquiries were set on foot, the crime laid bare and the innkeeper punished.

In order further to support his thesis a number of other anecdotes were told by Quintus, including examples of predictions which had been fulfilled, and ending by expressing a wish that such phenomena may be explained. In dealing with these stories Cicero pointed out that the evidence for them was not entirely satisfactory. Although Quintus was willing to admit that no prediction could be considered fulfilled unless chance coincidence had been excluded, Cicero maintained that

even then certainty cannot be achieved. For soothsayers are not always so unfortunate that their predictions never come true even by accident, and similarly though the occurrence of lucky guesses a semblance of supernormal power can be given. With regard to such physical phenomena as sweating and bleeding statues[1] Cicero stated that these appearances are due to unusual but purely natural conditions, and he completed his case by inquiring whether it is more consonant with philosophy to consider these stories of supernormal phenomena according to the superstitious theories of fortune-tellers, than to seek an explanation based on natural causation. " O vim maximum erroris ! " he exclaimed, and gave a finishing touch to his argument by a succinct survey of the material put forward by Quintus and its explanation based upon reasonable grounds, although unfortunately he omitted to discuss the dreamer's vision of the murder at the inn.

[1] A book on these occurrences in connexion with the Abbé Vachère, who died as recently as 1921, has been published over the signature of Dr. Birven.

In the famous *Cena Trimalchionis of Petronius* we have a satirical romance which throws into strong relief social conditions at the time of Nero. In this amusing romance a number of anecdotes are told illustrating the various beliefs of the times, and of these some are of interest in connection with current ideas on supernormal phenomena. One of these tales is an example of lycanthropy, that is to say, it treats of the widespread belief in the capacity of certain persons to turn themselves into wolves or other animals.

A companion of Trimalchion relates that one day he had a remarkable experience with a soldier friend of his. They had started early upon an expedition, and as the moon was shining brilliantly, it was almost as clear as day. It so happened that the two passed by a cemetery, and there the soldier stopped and began to utter adjurations to the stars. His companion then saw him strip off his clothes and put them by the side of the road. Having urinated round the garments he was suddenly changed into a wolf, which howled and disappeared

into the woods. Terrified, his companion went up to the clothes, but found them turned to stone, and still more alarmed he set off towards the house of a lady friend which happened to be at no great distance. She was surprised to find him in such a state, and told him that, had he arrived earlier, he would have been of great assistance, as a wolf had entered the fold and killed all the sheep. Fortunately the beast did not escape unscathed, as one of the servants had managed to give it a slash on the neck. Having heard this tale he waited until dawn and then hastened back to where the clothes had been laid, but he found only some blood and no trace of the garments which had been petrified. But on going home he found his friend the soldier, lying bleeding like an ox and a doctor was busy bandaging his neck. Then he knew that his friend was a wer-wolf and never again would he eat so much as a piece of bread with him.[2]

We may smile at such tales and regard them as but the products of a fevered

[2] Similar stories are told to-day of the wer-tigers and leopards of the Assam Hills. See *Jour. S.P.R.*, 1921-1922 (1922), xx, pp. 386-387.

imagination. We may pass them over with a sorrowful look and regret the superstition and credulity of mankind. But such attitudes scarcely help us to elucidate the real meaning behind these world-wide tales. Light can only come by painstaking investigation and careful research in the field and in the library, for behind these beliefs lies far more than would appear at first sight. Amongst the Sema Nagas of the Assam Hills an injury done to one of the man-tigers or man-leopards involves the risk of injury to the men to whom they " belong ". But the wounds on the human body do not appear, it is said, at the time that the animal is wounded but only later when the man has heard what has happened. Then the suffering commences and when the animal dies—the man dies also. Suggestion? self-induced phantasy? They are but words. We know little if anything of the processes, but these tales remain abiding monuments to facts, wrongly interpreted and understood it is true, but facts which cry aloud for explanation and experiment.

Everyone has heard of materializations, or the result of the supposed power possessed by certain mediums of forming the bodies of human beings, which occasionally seem animated and which walk and talk like living mortals. Sir William Crookes, the English physicist, declared that he had seen such phenomena, and similar stories abound in the literature of spiritualism. The present writer has often seen materializations, but to him they usually seemed more like waving pieces of luminous chiffon than human figures, although his companions recognized their relatives and conversed with them. However this may be there would not seem to have been the possibility of similar discrepancies in the tale of the fair Philinnion told about 1700 years ago by old Phlegon of Tralles in Lydia. The story runs how the young lady (we can call her Phil) was enamoured of a comely youth named Machatas, but her parents looked askance at him and compelled their daughter to wed one Krateros in his place. Unable to bear her miserable lot Phil pined away and shortly afterwards

died of a broken heart. Some five months later Machatas was staying with Demostratos, the harsh father of Phil, and after the young man had retired for the night the dead girl appeared to him and lamented her sad condition. The next night the same thing happened, and the servant maid, evidently thinking something amiss, or perhaps casting an amorous eye herself upon young Machatas, looked through the keyhole, saw the youth with his fair companion and scurried off to tell her master and mistress the wonderful news. They, thinking doubtless she was mad or tipsy, sternly rebuked her, and the maid in her turn taunted them for their unreasonable scepticism.

In the morning Machatas was closely questioned and he confirmed everything that the maid had said, showing a clasp and a golden ring that Phil had left with him the first night of her visit. Thereupon Phil's mother burst into tears, and Machatas, distressed, promised to show her her lost child if the latter should again appear. The next night the same thing happened. Machatas must have been a very

powerful materializing medium. Phil was in excellent spirits and actually ate and drank with her companion.[1] Thereupon Machatas called her parents, and when they arrived they were struck almost dumb with astonishment. Crying out they approached their daughter and embraced her, the phantom subsequently disappearing.[2] Some time later the family vault was visited, and on opening Phil's grave all they found were the ornaments which Machatas had received the first time the spirit had appeared. But when they got home from their unpleasant task something even more gruesome awaited them. For there in the house they found the corpse of their daughter, and it was taken and buried

[1] It might be thought that such phenomena belong to confessed fiction, but such appears not to be the case. Did not Jesus eat of fish and honey (Luke XXIV. 42-43)? And did not Archdeacon Colley, of the Anglican Communion, tell the story of how, in prosaic Bloomsbury in 1877, he gave a materialized figure baked apples to eat, and how the skin and the pips fell out of the medium's mouth when the latter was six or seven feet from the phantom?

[2] Sir William Crookes likewise embraced the phantom, Katie King, the modern counterpart of the fair Phil.

outside the gates of the city, and Machatas soon died of inconsolable grief.

Although this story may not, I fear, find acceptance in certain modern quarters, the olden tales are no more marvellous than those which are being circulated to-day about the performances of spiritualistic mediums. Among the great mediums of the past none had a greater reputation than the celebrated Apollonius of Tyana, who was born just before the beginning of the Christian era. If we can credit the account left by his biographer, we can hardly doubt that Apollonius had remarkable powers. But if we prefer to imagine that he was either a conscious deceiver or was merely deluded himself, then the stories about him will be curious illustrations of how superstitions of the year 1 A.D. resemble those of 1930 A.D. At any rate Apollonius was certainly a troublesome and irritating person, and his pose of superiority must have made him unpopular amongst those who cherished little belief in his transcendental powers. Like so many other people who claim to possess puissant

gifts, Apollonius occasionally fell into inconsistences, which throw some light on the value he himself ascribed to his talents. According to his biographer, Apollonius claimed to be a remarkable linguist and to be able to understand all languages, but it appears that when in India he was obliged to employ an interpreter during his interview with a certain monarch, a fact which, if true, is of some importance, and was naturally seized upon by Eusebius in his criticisms of Apollonius. However that may be, the tales told of this medium are of considerable interest, and we cannot do better than turn over the pages of his biography and pick out here and there some representative examples.

In those days (just as to-day) men and women were believed occasionally to be possessed by demons, and gifted persons sometimes had the power of casting out these unwelcome intruders. Usually the patient showed signs of some grave malady or pronounced mental disturbance, but now and then a learned sage would state that a person who behaved in an un-

becoming manner was possessed of a devil. Thus it is said that Apollonius one day was talking about the subject of libations, and discussing with great seriousness how they ought to be poured out. In the audience was a certain young man, whose reputation with the ladies was not of the best. When Apollonius was indicating the precise portion of the brim of a cup over which a libation should be poured, the youth, unable to restrain his mirth, burst into a roar of laughter. Apollonius, who was very irritated by this unseemly interruption in the flow of his wisdom, was willing to overlook the insult, and in his benevolent manner explained that it was not the young man who was misbehaving but a demon who possessed him. No sooner had Apollonius made this pronouncement than the youth was controlled by the devil, who admitted the obsession and promised to leave. Promises however were of no good to Apollonius. He favoured a manifestation ; so the devil very kindly obliged by an exhibition of telekinesis. A statue, standing in the porch, began to glide about

and finally fell over, whereat the young man awoke from the trance, and instead of falling in love with maidens' charms fell in love with philosophy and modelled his future life upon that of Apollonius.

Another remarkable story which takes us into the world of demon lovers so well known to antiquity and the Middle Ages is told of Apollonius and perhaps deserves mention here. The incident was said to have occurred in Corinth and to have occasioned much talk at the time and many wild rumours. It is centred around a certain youth called Menippus, who was endowed with singularly beautiful qualities both of body and mind. Walking alone one day he chanced to meet a fair lady who accosted him, clasped his hand, and invited him to visit her that evening. He agreed and the upshot was that they became engaged to be married. When Apollonius heard of the betrothal he determined to prevent its consummation on the ground that the lady was really a kind of vampire who was enticing Menippus to live with her, in order that she might suck away his life blood. Accord-

ingly at the wedding feast Apollonius appeared, and announced his opinion to the company, among whom of course were Menippus and his bride, both of whom were horrified at the news. It seems that the feast had been given by the lady, who represented herself as rich, and the costly appointments and excellent service supported her claims. When however Apollonius made his announcement both plate and retinue dematerialized, and the lady confessed that she was indeed a vampire and was merely trying to fatten up Menippus in order to enjoy a succulent repast. We are not told what became of the lady after such a frank avowal of her purposes. Presumably she disappeared with a screech, like another demon whom Apollonius exposed when he was travelling with some friends in the Caucasus. This story is so curious that we might almost doubt whether it could ever have obtained credence—did it not resemble stories which are told to-day by persons whose acquaintance with the writings of moral theologians seems to have somewhat dulled their capacity of

estimating the value of human evidence.[1]

It would appear that occasionally such demon lovers were more earthly than their claims implied. There is an amusing story which, with slight variations is found both in the *Alphabet of Tales*[2] and also in the *Dialogues of Caesarius of Heisterbach,* who died about 1245 A.D.

A certain scholar, who in spite of his learning had his wanton moments, planned one evening to spend the night with a lady who had promised to visit him. Unfortunately however the lady was unable to keep her appointment, and a demon scenting the possibility of destroying a human soul came in her shape. In the morning her companion urged her to leave, but she looked up and asked him who he thought she was. Surprised, he immediately gave the name of the lady, but the demon replied that it was not so but that she was really a devil. " To this

[1] Cf. Montague Summers, *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology* (London, 1926), p. 95.

[2] A translation (15th century) of the *Alphabetum Narrationum,* which may have been compiled in 1308 by Arnold of Liège.

John, who was a strange man replied with a strange word, which modesty forbids me to repeat, scoffing at the devil and no whit disturbed ".[1]

Although the phenomena of modern mediums usually possess little utilitarian value, those presented by Apollonius occasionally proved very startling in the eyes of the law.[2] At one time it was said that Apollonius had been arrested upon the charge of impiety against the emperor Nero and was brought before the minister Tigellinus. The charge was supposed to have been written out upon a scroll, but when this was unrolled preparatory to being read all the writing had vanished. On another occasion Apollonius was actually in prison and confined in chains. When his friend Damis came to visit him Apollonius showed him how easy it was to escape. All he had to do was merely

[1] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *The Dialogue on Miracles*. Tr. H. v. E. Scott and C. C. S. Bland (London, 1929), Bk. iii, chap. x, vol. i, p. 137.

[2] I ought perhaps to make an exception of Mr. L. P. Rand, the friend of the Davenports. In the middle of the nineteenth century he was delivered from prison by angels. See his *Sketch of the History of the Davenport Boys* (Oswego, 1859).

to withdraw his leg from the fetters and put it back again. It was a case of what modern spiritualists call " the passage of matter through matter ". Similarly, when closely confined in a temple Apollonius simply escaped from his bonds, and the doors of the temple opened of themselves without anybody touching them.

Besides possessing the powers of exorcism and the mundane gifts described above, Apollonius laid claim to clairvoyant faculties. It was reported that once when lecturing at Ephesus he suddenly announced the death by assassination of Domitian in Rome, and later news confirmed the truth of his statement. Besides being a famous medium, Apollonius was a great traveller, and there would seem to be some evidence that he obtained acquaintance with occult mysteries from his voyages in the East. Be that as it may, he described the levitation of the Indian Brahmans, and when conversing with the Gymnosophists on the banks of the Nile an elm tree spoke to him, a phenomenon which is reminiscent of the talking trees described by my friend

Mr. J. H. Driberg among the Lango of Uganda.[1]

In the earlier centuries of the Christian era magic and spiritualistic phenomena were occupying a good deal of the attention of learned Greek and Roman writers, some of whom were beginning to apply the exercise of reason to tales of the miraculous. Thus L. Annaeus Seneca, who may have been born a few years before the birth of Christ, treats of various obscure matters in his *Natural Questions*, and discusses such subjects as incantations, divination and prodigies. He ridicules a number of customs which seem to him ludicrous, such as diverting storms by pricking one's fingers on account of the superstition that in blood resides a potent virtue which has the capacity for repelling clouds. He asks whether it is not easier to suppose that the whole thing is a bundle of lies, for the impossibility of blood possessing such fancied virtues is obvious. On the other hand Seneca recognized the value of certain

[1] J. H. Driberg, *The Lango* (London, 1923), p. 235, cf. the oracular oak of Dodona.

portents, and he even went so far as to imagine that divination from thunder might have a certain solid value. The light of science was only just beginning to shine more brightly. Belief in authority was waning, and the age of experiment was showing its first prenatal stirrings.

It was however with Lucian of Samosata that scepticism began to become more vigorous. Flourishing towards 200 A.D this great rhetorician and writer of commonsense often used to turn his attention to occult subjects, and exposed the frauds of his day in a manner and by means of arguments and experiments which have an almost startlingly modern touch in their vivid realism. One of the most remarkable pictures of a fraudulent medium ever penned is Lucian's account of the famous wonderworker Alexander of Abonutichus. He was supposed to have been a pupil of a friend of Apollonius of Tyana and to have been a native of Paphlagonia in the north of Asia Minor. There would appear little reason for doubting the existence of this person, and his exploits as narrated by Lucian

ring so true that Alexander may be taken as a fair prototype of the numerous company which followed—and follow—his example.

The story begins with a description of the oracle-monger himself. Handsome and white skinned, he had piercing eyes and a sonorous voice, whilst a little artificial hair was dexterously interwoven with his own locks. Nature had not only liberally endowed his physical person, but also had added other qualities which were very necessary for the successful worker of wonders. Thus to his bodily charm he added an understanding, resource, acuteness and memory which were above those of ordinary men. But coupled with these gifts Alexander possessed a temperament compounded of trickery and cunning, which qualities were to serve him in good stead in after life. In appearance he was the best and kindest of men ; simple and unsophisticated, he seemed incapable of any kind of deceit or guile. As already stated, he was early apprenticed to one of Apollonius' friends who had the reputation of being a fraudu-

lent medium, and who found his pupil apt and easily moulded to his will. Shortly after his apprenticeship it seems that his master died and Alexander threw in his lot with one Cocconas, the two living upon the proceeds of their mediumship. They soon found a dupe, or in modern language a 'sucker', who provided a source of wealth for them both, and it was at Pella where the lady in question lived that a great idea came to Alexander. At this place a certain variety of harmless serpents was found, and one day they happened to secure a fat specimen at a cheap price. They then set about devising a scheme in which the plump reptile was destined to play a leading role. Alexander proposed that they should begin by 'working' among the Paphlagonians, for whose intelligence he had a profound contempt. First of all preparations had to be made. At Chalcedon they secretly buried some forged tablets which told a story of how Aesculapius, together with his father Apollo, would shortly take up their abode in Abonutichus. Naturally the pair

arranged for the discovery of the tablets, and in due course that discovery was made. The finds created even greater excitement than the supposed forged tablets of Glozel. The news flew to Abonutichus, and the inhabitants, overjoyed at the honour about to be done to their city, prepared to lay the foundations of a temple. Unfortunately at this juncture Cocconas died, and Alexander was left to enjoy his triumph alone. In no wise disturbed by the loss of his companion he arrived shortly afterwards in Abonutichus, clothed in white and purple and posing as the son of Perseus and Apollo. He pretended to fall into ecstatic states, and foamed from the mouth, a proceeding which Lucian suggests was brought about by chewing soapwort. However it was managed the spectacle induced awe and reverence in those that saw it, and noticing the effect he was producing Alexander proceeded to prepare for the second act of his little drama.

Firstly a faked serpent's head was made resembling the head of the snake which had been brought from Pella. It

was made so that it opened and shut, disclosing a forked tongue controlled by a long black horse-hair. Then one quiet night, when all the innocent inhabitants were sound asleep, Alexander slipped out of his house and went to the foundations of the temple which were partly dug. There he pressed into the mud a hollow goose egg which he had previously blown and in which he had inserted a tiny new-born reptile. Next day the people were astonished to see the prophet, clothed only in a golden spangled loin cloth, rushing about the market place and delivering an impassioned harangue. Suddenly he began to utter unintelligible sounds and ran in a frenzy of excitement to the temple, followed by a gaping crowd. Jumping down into the mud he speedily found the egg, and holding it aloft declared that within was Aesculapius himself. Breaking the egg he showed the reptile within, and the populace, enchanted with the miracle, went home praising the Gods. Now Alexander knew the publicity value of expectation. He remained at home for a few days, whilst people flocked to the

city from all quarters. "Only their outward forms distinguished them from sheep", writes Lucian, and the simile is far from being out of date to-day.

But while Alexander remained at home he was by no means idle. Visitors and 'sitters' were permitted to see the medium by appointment and at specified hours. He received them whilst reclining upon a couch, and in his arms was the fat snake sacred to Aesculapius. Its real head was tucked away under his armpit whilst the fake head supplied the deficiency. Since light was considered harmful to the phenomena, the séances were held in semi-darkness, and just as in modern times, attentive observations were prevented as being inimicable to the manifestations. Medals and metallic images were sold at the door; and no modern medium ever did a more roaring trade. Alexander, however, was not content. His next step was to provide communications and messages from God. Each sitter had to write down a question on paper, and fasten up the packet so as to make fraud impossible. The medium

then took the billets away to an inner sanctuary in order to learn the will of the deity, and on returning he delivered up the packets with seals intact. In order to open the billets Alexander employed many of the now time-worn methods,and when he failed he depended upon his own ingenuity to return some ambiguous answer.

As time went on he began to recognize the value of confederates, and the business grew to such proportions that he founded Alexander's Bureau for dealing with requests for spirit messages. Some, however, began to suspect that all was not well and rumours began to spread to which Alexander replied by calling the sceptics atheists or Christians. He saw that fresh phenomena must be invented and so a method of producing direct spirit voices was devised. The windpipes of cranes were used, and these attached to the serpent's fake head were first of all used in such a way that an assistant was able to speak through them from outside the room.[1] These particular manifesta-

[1] Nowadays the medium himself usually speaks down a trumpet in pitch darkness. They appear to have done things more artistically in ancient days, or perhaps our credulity is greater.

tions were produced only for rich and influential people, and soon the medium's fame reached Rome itself. Here lived many elderly persons who proved easy and lucrative prey. Among them was one Rutilianus, who had held a high official position, but who was so devoted to occult phenomena that Lucian said that all that had to be done was to show him a stone smeared with grease and flower bedecked, for him to fall down before it and pray. He sent messengers to Abonutichus asking for information, and they came back filled with tales of the marvels of which they had heard. Rutilianus, delighted, resolved to test the medium himself. He sent a carefully sealed billet with the question as to the identity of the teachers who were to instruct his son. Alexander, scenting an old man who loved flattery, replied that they would be Pythagoras and Homer, but unfortunately the lad died a few days later. Just as in modern times the sitters will help a medium out of a difficulty often better than he could help himself, so Rutilianus came to the rescue. How true it was! His son would

enjoy the teaching of these great sages in the other world!

The next step was an attempt on the part of Alexander to increase his popularity. He began to perform sacred dances in public, and in certain of them he carelessly permitted part of his thigh to be uncovered, which, being coated with gold paint seemed made of the precious metal. A lively controversy ensued as to the meaning of this marvellous phenomenon, in precisely the same way as learned men to-day will argue about the dematerialization of mediums' bodies. Some less credulous people tried to expose the impostor, but such a task was difficult, and one objector, more successful than the others was stoned as an impious sceptic and was only rescued with difficulty. Lucian himself sent some questions to Alexander which the latter failed to answer satisfactorily, and Rutilianus then sent some questions about Lucian to which Alexander replied by saying that Lucian was much too fond of pretty girls and was in the custom of frequenting night clubs. The charlatan's career could,

however, scarcely go on indefinitely. Proud of his success and contemptuous of his dupes, among whom was numbered "the grey-haired physician Paetus, dishonouring equally his grey hairs and his profession", he announced that he would live till he was 150, but unfortunately he died at the ripe old age of three score years and ten, mourned by his followers and honoured by rich and poor alike.

There is no reason to suppose that the frauds of Alexander stood alone among those practised by the mediums of the period. Hippolytus, bishop of Rome, although naturally prejudiced against miracle workers, gives us enough material to show that he had had experience in such matters and that at least some of his information was reliable. In the book which has been attributed to him, and which is called the *Refutation of all Heresies*, he mentions facts very similar to those recorded by Lucian, such as the practice of holding dark séances, "for it is impossible for mortal nature to behold divine things"; the production of direct spirit voices through tubes made from

long-necked birds or simply from metallic cylinders; and the "immunity to fire" test which he alleges was produced by smearing the feet with certain substances. Similarly he records various methods of sealed letter reading, and for the production of lights he mentions the ingenious use of fish scales stuck on the ceiling. Another device which must have caused great astonishment was the talking skull. This was said to have been made of an ox caul, to the back being attached a speaking tube which led to the mouth of a confederate. Lighted incense was placed round the head which when ignited melted away under the eyes of the spectators.

As the centuries advanced and the influence of Christianity began to extend, so did questionings concerning the basis of magic and supernormal phenomena become more insistent and peremptory. But we have passed the limits of our space, and a discussion of the problems which perplexed the period would be out of place in our sketch of the beginnings of spiritualism. The epoch was to a

certain extent one of philosophical speculation and the influence of the Neo-Platonic school was considerable. Porphyry, in his famous letter to Anebo, puts forward a series of questions which puzzle the student to-day just as they puzzled students at that time ; and the replies of Iamblichus merely add to our bewilderment and embarrassment. According to Iamblichus who, in his book on the Mysteries deals with a number of phenomena, the presence of an angel or demon is often indicated by luminous appearances, and these vary accordingly to the agency producing them. Such a belief extends from the earliest times to the present day. In the Middle Ages monks used to say how they saw demons flitting about the churches and glittering with a sinister light ; while in the Alphabet of Tales we read of a devil who appeared with great lights about him and who even went so far as to bring rings and jewels[1] to one whom he had led astray.

The theories of the Neo-Platonists need not concern us here. My friend Mr.

[1] The 'apports' of the modern spiritualists.

G. W. Lambert had published an admirable summary of the work of Plotinus in this field, and I would refer interested readers to his paper.[1]

We have seen the rise of spiritualistic belief in the ancient East and the gradual diffusion of magical arts throughout the West. We have seen how supernormal phenomena have been reported in all times, and how side by side with the spontaneous manifestations as seen in hallucinations and haunted dwellings occur phenomena which can, it is said, be induced through the operations of the magician and the medium. Finally we have caught glimpses here and there of the humbug and the charlatan producing 'phenomena' fraudulently and reaping therefrom a rich monetary harvest. Is it all folly and deception? Is it all due to delusions in men's minds; delusions made possible through that desire for Life which permeates all humanity? We cannot attempt to answer these questions here, but in the concluding chapter I hope to offer a few reflections upon this difficult and perplexing subject.

[1] *Proceedings*, S.P.R., Jan. 1927, xxxvi, Pt. 101, pp. 393-413.

CONCLUSION

In the early part of this essay we have caught a glimpse of certain aspects of magic and spiritualism as they have been reflected in distant civilizations of the past. At the present time anthropology is beginning to concern itself with origins and historical sequences in the growth of customs and ideas. We are beginning to perceive that the once fashionable notion of the similarity of the workings of the human mind must be to some extent at least abandoned, and that light must be sought rather in historical events than in supposed psychological mechanisms. Thus it would appear more reasonable to suppose that the idea of Burmese hepatoscopy was derived untimately from Babylonia, than to suppose that some obscure similarity in the working of the Babylonian and Burmese mind had impelled the two groups to examine livers for the purpose of divination. There can be no doubt, I think, that certain forms

of magical procedure have been diffused over wide areas and may have originated in one place only. How far this can be said to be a general rule it is hard to say. It has been thought by some that under the influence of Egyptian civilization magical ideas began to take root among native peoples, for it is said, that we find traces of magical practices wherever traces of the so-called Archaic civilization are to be discerned. In all considerations of this nature it is wise to rid our minds of all preconceived notions and to set out clearly before us precisely what it is that we are trying to discuss.

Two main factors of importance immediately present themselves. We have the psychological factor which clearly emerges in such practices as crystal-gazing and the various automatisms ; and the cultural factor which is concerned with the various methods through which such faculties can be demonstrated and utilized. Now it can hardly be supposed that the faculty of seeing hallucinatory visions in polished surfaces, or of writing ' automatically ', was originally the possession of one band

only of the human family ; although it is not impossible that the means by which such faculties were first brought into conscious use were the invention of such a group. Indeed it would appear probable that, had a certain people noted and developed these faculties the fame and fear produced thereby would have added very materially to the power and influence of so gifted a people. Unfortunately we do not know yet sufficient about the magic of early Egypt to justify us in an attempt to locate the origin of spiritualistic practices in the Nile valley. There is little doubt that the knowledge of such processes in late Egypt was considerable, and the fame of the Egyptian magicians spread far and wide. Moreover the evidence, as far as we at present possess it, seems to support the view that later civilizations developed both theories of occultism and varied methods of approach, but that since the days of Cicero or even Plotinus little further progress has been made in the West.

Now before considering the basis of these widespread beliefs, it may be as

well for the benefit of those who are not acquainted with the facts to indicate very briefly the scope of spiritualistic manifestations. Roughly classified they fall into two great divisions: the subjective, or mental phenomena, and the objective or physical phenomena. Both these classes can be discussed from two different aspects; that is to say we can deal with them as they occur spontaneously, or on the other hand we can consider them from the point of view of practical experiment.

By spontaneous subjective phenomena we mean such manifestations as apparitions of the living and the dead, the occurrence of unexpected trances in normal persons, so-called clairvoyance, 'telepathic' faculties and similar alleged powers. Occasionally these can be brought within the orbit of scientific experimentation, and then they constitute a field of observation of the highest interest and importance. In the spontaneous objective class we include such phenomena as are said to be observed in houses where poltergeist manifestations

occur, together with a mass of similar occurrences which take place apparently independently of the presence of any known medium. The experimental variety consists of those phenomena which are said to take place in séance rooms in connection with mediums or medicine men, and comprise an immense variety of odd happenings ranging from the simple rap to the formation of human figures endowed with life.

Now there are many ways by which we can approach the study of these problems. We can dismiss the whole of the testimony from whatever source as worthless, and regard the whole of the phenomena, subjective and objective, as due to fraud, delusion and superstition. On the other hand we can regard the reality of the phenomena as proven and modern spiritualism as the logical successor of the spiritualism of ancient times. Both these positions, with slight variations, have been held in the past and are being held to-day, and in order to arrive at them their upholders have chosen to ignore the scientific method of approaching obscure problems. For we

cannot discuss matters of this kind without understanding our facts and dismissing all those prejudices which are apt to warp our judgment and hinder us from a just appreciation of the complexity of the questions in dispute.

Now in order to reduce the problem to its simplest terms let us touch upon a few phenomena, the existence of which is not denied by anyone who has taken the trouble to examine the evidence. Thus the reality of crystal visions is firmly established and it is probable that they were both known and utilized from early times. The question concerning these phenomena which has *not* yet been satisfactorily answered is how far these visions at any time reveal knowledge which the percipient could *never at any time normally* have possessed. Popular opinion throughout the ages replies unhesitatingly that such information *can* be obtained and points to the widespread evidence of thief-catching magic as evidence for this belief. No answer to this question can be given until scientific observers, with knowledge of the sources of error and similar factors,

undertake a careful examination of crystal-gazing phenomena under properly controlled conditions. Such an inquiry, if systematically pursued for a considerable length of time, would enable us to determine with some degree of success whether the subject matter of the visions contains anything normally beyond the range of the percipient's knowledge. It is incredible that this has not been done. It is still more incredible that the necessity for doing it is not recognized.

Let us take another example. No one, however sceptical, denies that certain people have had experiences which they describe as ' seeing a ghost ' or an apparition. We do not know how far back such phenomena have been observed but we have no reason to suppose that history does not go back to the most remote antiquity. Now it would be a mistake to suppose that the only people who see apparitions are hysterical subjects or those given to hallucinations. It is true that such people do have experiences of this nature, and our insane asylums contain patients whose hallucinations, both

visual and auditory, are well known. But the transient hallucinations of the sane belong to a different class. That they exist, and can sometimes be connected with facts apparently unknown to the percipient, is in my opinion at least, almost beyond dispute.

Thus we have here two classes of phenomena in which modern experience tends to discover elements wholly inexplicable in terms of what we already know of mind and body. There does not appear to have been much change either in the inducement of the phenomena or in their main characteristics. But it is clear that the effects produced upon popular imagination have considerably varied. In the days of old a person who had the reputation of being able to induce veridical visions in a crystal or a bowl would be regarded as a mighty magician, and his fame and influence would increase in proportion with his successes. It would not seem unlikely that the Egyptians had a good deal of knowledge of such methods, and the renown of their magicians and sorcerers in later times may perhaps have been

founded upon their good fortune in this respect. As the secret knowledge began to filter down into the lower orders it would become debased and unofficial cults would begin to flourish. As civilization advanced each people would further investigations and experiments, some concentrating upon divination, others upon necromancy. We cannot hope to understand the influence of sorcery, magic and witchcraft until we frankly recognize that certain of the fundamental phenomena underlying these processes are still wholly inexplicable to the modern world. Such a statement does not in the least imply that they are supernatural or even supernormal in the sense that they are beyond what habitually occurs. It merely suggests that at present we have no adequate means of expressing them in terms of the known and that their relation with what we have already discovered eludes our scrutiny.

Thus we have seen that although the explanations hitherto offered may have been incorrect; although the whole subject be burdened with a mass of super-

stitious delusions and fanciful ideas, there is a kernel of fact within the outer layers, a kernel from which growth one day will be apparent. Phenomena of certain well-recognized types have occurred throughout the ages and are occurring still. To-day they remain unexplained, partly doubtless on account of the neglect of science and partly also on account of the inevitable attraction they possess for all kinds of charlatans, curiosity-mongers and cranks. In olden times their influence must have been much more considerable and may have played a far greater part in the origins of religious belief and philosophical speculation than has hitherto been admitted. It is only through scientific examination that we can hope to separate delusion from fact and clear away the mists of error. The obscure faculties of men cannot much longer be permitted to remain on the Index Rerum Prohibitarum of official science. The darkness has already lasted too long. The beginnings of spiritualism lie deeply buried in the past. It is for inquirers in the future to determine how far our ancestors were

victims of delusion or merely theorists whose ideas were consistent with an age in which the scientific method was hardly conceived.